



## Women and Medicine

**I**t has become traditional that each December *The Western Journal of Medicine* appears as a special issue. This is the 10th consecutive year that the editors have tried to select a topic that seemed likely to be of increasing importance in medical practice in the years immediately ahead. The topics, in the order of their appearance, have been clinical nutrition, cost of care, geriatrics, occupational and environmental medicine, cross-cultural medicine, personal health maintenance, high tech medicine, medical informatics, AIDS from a global perspective, and, now, women and medicine. For each of these special issues we have been fortunate to find a Special Editor, interested in and knowledgeable of the topic, who was willing and able to take on the formidable task of assembling a special issue of this journal. This year has been no exception. Linda Hawes Clever, MD,\* has brought this issue together under the rubric of women and medicine, and it addresses some very important trends and changes that have begun to occur in medical practice and in the medical profession.

There is much new that is happening in both medicine and in our society. Much of it pertains to the sexes. It is no longer the man's world that it was not so very long ago. For much of history the talents of women have too often been submerged, but we now seem to be clearly on the verge of a new era. Women are moving more and more out of the home and into business, industry, and the professions. They are demanding and beginning to receive equal recognition and equal pay for what they do. They have been officially designated a minority for purposes of affirmative action for their employment in both the public and private sectors of society. It is not surprising that all this has been reflected in new attitudes, new insights, and some changes in patient care and within the medical profession itself. There is a new interest in diseases peculiar to women and fresh approaches to understanding and treating them. Paternalism in physician attitudes has given way to greater recognition of women's sensitivities and rights to share more actively in decisions about their care. Women are entering the medical profession in unprecedented numbers, and this surge of women physicians, whether in academia or in practice, is beginning to find expression, and soon will surely have great impact. There is already significant affirmative action to bring more women physicians to positions of leadership in both academia and organized medicine.

This advent of women to status equal with men in our profession and in patient care itself is long overdue. The purpose of this issue will have been served if it provides some insights into what is occurring and if it gives a glimpse of what is certain to be a new and even more exciting era for American medicine in what is the easily foreseeable future. Our thanks to Linda Clever for giving so much of her talents and of herself to the preparation of this very special issue.

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